

# **TURKEY**

## *Yesterday & Today*

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*A brief  
Political  
History of Turkey*

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## Abbreviations

CUP	Committee of Union and Progress [İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti]
CPT	Communist Party of Turkey [Türkiye Komünist Partisi]
CRWU	Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Union [Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Federasyonu]
DP	Democratic Party [Demokrat Parti]
FIC	Federation of Idea Clubs [Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu]
FRP	Free Republican Party [Serbest Cumhuriyetçi Fikası]
JP	Justice Party [Adalet Partisi]
NSP	National Salvation Party [Milli Selamet Partisi]
NDR	National Democratic Revolutionary [Milli Demokratik Devrim]
NMP	Nationalist Movement Party [Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi]
MP	Motherland Party [Anavatan Partisi]
PLAT	People's Liberation Army of Turkey [Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu]
PLP-FT	People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey [Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi]
PRP	Progressive Republican Party [Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fikası]
RCSE	Revolutionary Culture Societies of the East [Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları]
RY	Revolutionary Youth [Dev-Genç]
RPP	Republican People's Party [Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi]
SDPP	Social Democratic Populist Party [Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti]
TPP	True Path Party [Doğru Yol Partisi]
WPK	Workers Party of Kurdistan [Partia Karkeren Kurdistan]
WPT	Workers Party of Turkey [Türkiye İşçi Partisi]



las. They have pressurised the Kurdish population to immigrate to the western part of Turkey. Many Kurdish people were immigrated to the metropolitan cities to live in extreme conditions of poverty in the shanty towns.

The reactionary forces do not only attack Kurds. They subjected their attacks against Alevite-Kurds as well. In 1993, the radical Islamist supporters attacked to a traditional Alevite Festival in Sivas. They burned down the hotel which hosted artists, dancers, speakers and politicians who went there to contribute to the Festival. 37 people were killed. The government forces (the army and the police) only watched this incident and did nothing.

In the 1994's local government elections, the rising of the radical Islam movement was sealed. A radical Islamist party known as the Welfare Party gained the control of major cities such as Istanbul and Ankara and many other small ones. Although, the votes they took were slightly increased in comparison to the 1970's, they seem to enjoy a popularisation in Turkey. Their achievement mostly result of the bankruptcy of the political parties in both the left and the right. In a stagnated economical situation and in a undeclared war [the war in Kurdistan] the atmosphere the people live in is hopeless. They believe that they have tried all the political alternatives. In this climate the radical Islamist -as an untried alternative, promises equality in welfare, a tolerant nationalism. On the other hand, the state apparatus is in panic. They can not improve the economy (because they can not find enough money to borrow from the west ) and they are not able to stop the Kurdish rising with a bloody war. They know that they are losing the ideological credibility in the minds of people.

### *Pre-Republic Period: The Fall of the Ottomans (1870-1923)*

Today's Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Its inability to modernise and upgrade its social and economical structure led the Ottomans into a steady decline from the 17th century onwards, in contrast to European expansion and prosperity as a result of economic, social and cultural changes. Decline accelerated in the 18th century, which saw the decay of rural administration into small feudal-like states and increased unrest in the cities, disrupting food supplies and leading to widespread famine. Few of the innovations in technology that underlay European prosperity made their way into the empire. Early modernisation efforts mainly consisted of creating a European style army at the end of 18th century, yet this attempt was dismantled by the powerful janissaries with an insurrection in 1807. The important point to note is that, because the Ottoman empire rested on the principle of indivisibility of power that was adopted by the 15th century, this meant that the ruling elite of the Ottoman political structure solely relied on a powerful army to govern. That is why modernisation efforts had started firstly with the army. This entanglement of state apparatus and army always appears as one of the main features of the ruling structure of the state of Turkey till now. By a strange irony when the modernisation and westernisation of the army was achieved, the army became the sole protector of the modernisation and westernisation that was imposed on to (sometimes it used force to implement these) people from the top downwards during the Ottoman period and during the Turkish republican period.

The modernisation of the army became successful around 1830 by Mahmud II and later it was followed by governmental reorganisation. Yet by that time, the Ottoman Empire had become dependant on European powers in its internal and foreign politics. The movement of Tanzimat (which means regulations-reorganisation) was born from this weakness. Mahmud's sons Abdulmecid I and Abdulaziz put Tanzimat into practice in the form of a series of liberal and modernising reforms which were widely viewed in the West as an effort to encourage friendly relations with European powers. Among the reforms were the first comprehensive education system and the westernisation of commercial, maritime, and penal codes.

The centralisation of power removed all checks on the power of the emperor. This centralised absolute power of the emperor brought demands of a constitutional monarchy among newly formed western style intelligentsia that were called the Young Ottomans. The Young Ottomans were the product of newly set up western style colleges and universities (most important of these the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Government and the Military Academy. The graduates of these schools have played an important part in the political life of the Ottomans and one could say they still play an important role today in Turkey's political landscape). The



young Ottomans in a sense, represented partly the view of the ruling classes' demands and partly they represented an intellectual movement which came from the newly emerging petty bourgeois of major cities such as Istanbul and Izmir.

The demands of the Young Ottoman movement were met by Abdul Hamit II by declaring the first constitution in any Islamic country in 1876. Yet a year later he suspended the constitution and dissolved the newly formed parliament. This was followed by a couple of revolts -such as the revolt of students of the Military Medical School in Istanbul in 1893, by Young Ottomans but none of them succeeded. This set back led the Young Ottoman's movement into a more radical organisation, the Young Turks. Their membership consisted of mostly cities' intelligentsia but, they got also sympathisers from small army officers around the country. At the beginning of 1900, this movement was split into two factions mainly on the basis of the question of centralism of state power structure. The first faction was decentralist who represented the view of the newly emerging Ottoman bourgeoisie. The decentralist wing was headed by Prince Sebahattin who was a son of the Sultan's sister, who argued for a western style liberalism in which the state's role was restricted in every aspect of social life. The second faction that was later formed as the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), was near to French style jacobinism. They were arguing for a centralised and interventionist state structure. Moreover, like the French Revolution's government they were after a kind of dictatorship of intelligentsia, and they were seeking a radical transformation of the country by this dictatorship of the intelligentsia. However, it is notable that none of these factions had advocated the dissolution of the sultan and from the outset it seemed that the Committee of Union and Progress was more determined to come to power and to restrict the rights of the Sultan. In addition, the CUP had major support of most of the Young Turks's supporters (including nearly all of army originated sympathisers).

The CUP was operated as an illegal organisation and organised accordingly. Its organisation consisted a network of committees (cells) which spread all over the country. Meanwhile, Abdul Hamid II's absolutism was weakened in corresponding to increasing popularity of the Committee of Union and Progress. This resulted new revolts by the Committee of Union and Progress. In 1908, the "Young Turks Revolution" happened with the help of the army members of the CUP. A brigade from Salonika came to the capital Istanbul and forced Abdul Hamid II to restore Constitution of 1876 and recall the Parliament. Constitutional Monarch was declared and a western style parliament was formed. The rights of the Sultans were restricted accordingly. After the elections, the CUP formed the government. Nearly all the leaders of the CUP were originated from young army officers and this led an army style absolutist government.

Although these reforms put into practice, it seemed that these reforms

ment emerged with the feminist demands. Although, in the 1970's there was a strong women movement, these movements were an extension of the Marxist parties, and a few of them had ability to act in their initiative. In contrast to them, the new emerging women movement was more independent in their policies, yet they were less politicised from the general body of politics. On the other hand, a new unknown political group also emerged during that period: the anarchists. Although, limited on numbers and political experience anarchists started to organise themselves around a new publication "Kara".

Ozal's governments attempted to integrate the economy into the world capitalist system. They did this with lowering excess duties to imports and increasing the exports. In order to do this, they heavily borrowed money from the west and spent it to infrastructure projects. The worker started to earn less than before in 1970's because of the low wages [this was the result of restricted workers rights] and devaluation of the Turkish Lira. However, the heavy borrowing and its high interests to be paid, and the widespread corruption in the government led to a serious economic crisis that still continues. The corruption in government circles and in business circles had become a standard way of the dealings in Ozal's government. The finance that came from IMF and other Western Institutions for the projects were shared by the government ministers and the businessmen. This process brought Demirel that was the leader of the closed Justice Party, in power with a coalition government in 1992's elections.

The elections took place in 1992. Demirel's new party the True Path Party (TPP) and the social democrat's new party the Social Democratic Populist Party (SDPP) promised more democracy and less corruption. Thus they defeated the Motherland Party in elections. They have formed a coalition government that still is in the power now. When they came to power, they have not yet delivered their promises. The economy is in a more serious crisis than before. The redundancies are a pattern now in the industry and unemployment is soaring. The wages every became less and less in continuing devaluation of the Turkish Lira. The crisis became an economic stagnation after, Turkey's first women Prime Minister had formed a new coalition government with the social democrats after President Ozal's sudden death (Prime Minister Demirel became the president of Turkey.)

Regarding democratic rights, the coalition government has not brought much. The most urgent civic problem of Turkey, Kurds are still denied their ethnic rights. Indeed, there is a bloody war going on in the eastern part of Turkey between the Turkish army and the Kurdish guerrilla movement. The coalition government, instead of giving political rights to Kurdish people and seeking a political, peaceful solution to the problem, increases the volume of the war in the eastern provinces of Turkey. The army now are not only fighting with the Kurdish guerrillas, but have launched a war against all Kurdish population in these areas. They have destroyed the Kurdish villages and the towns which are suspected of helping the guerril-



body was allowed to criticise or give opinions -apart from positive ones, about the new constitution. It was an imposition to the public by the generals. They had to say either "Yes" or "No". In fact there was not any choice for the public, because both in "Yes" or "No" the military dictatorship was going to stay in the power. There was not any mention of leaving of the power by the generals.

In the referendum, the public mostly voted for "Yes" (%90) in the hope that accepting the new constitution would pay way to a more democratic regime and gradually to democracy. Another important feature of the referendum was that it was also the election of the presidency. To say "Yes" to the new constitution also meant to elect the leader of the military regime Kenan Evren as the president. Thus Kenan Evren became the president of Turkey.

In 1983, an election took place, yet this was a limited election in the sense that all political parties and the MP candidates of them were rigorously selected by the generals. The generals allowed only those that seemed to obey them. The most of the ex-politicians were not allowed to take part in the elections or to engage any kind of political activity.

From the elections a new formed party that had no ideological predecessor in the history of politics of Turkey, emerged as victorious. It was the Motherland Party (MP) that was headed by Turgut Ozal who was exchequer in the military regime. It was a conservative party and its main objective was transformation of the economy to a real capitalist one. They were trying to open up the closed economy of Turkey to the capitalist markets. It was backed by the USA.

Although, the elections took place, the military regime was still in power. All decision and policy making bodies of the state structure were under the control of the army. The new constitution with its undemocratic articles made it possible this for the military generals.

During the first half of the decade, the military regime effectively dismantled any kind of possibility of the left-wing opposition, yet in the eastern part of Turkey, they faced a growing Kurdish guerrilla movement and opposition. The Kurdish movement was called the Workers Party of Kurdistan (WPK) that was headed by an ex-member of Kurdish Youth Organisation, the Revolutionary Culture Societies of the East in 1960's, Abdullah Ocalan. In fact, the military regime and Ozal's government had wiped out all the left-wing opposition that symbolises a social freedom movement, yet they were unable to suppress the Kurdish movement that symbolises a national freedom movement. Gradually, the guerrilla movement became a mass movement in the eastern part of Turkey.

In the middle of the 1980's, the regime became more flexible in political terms. This gave an opportunity to the remaining left-wing groups to express themselves at the legal level. Some of the Marxist organisations of 1970's started to organise new political groups. Moreover, a women move-

were far from solving the Ottoman Empire's heavy problems. The empire had become wholly a dependant of European powers (it is enough to mention that the Empire's finance was governed by a bank -the Ottoman Bank- which was owned by European powers). The empire and its future were under the fierce competition of Imperialist powers. It was going to dissolve, but the problem had been who was going to win slices of it. Therefore the government of CUP could not save itself to become a tool of western imperialist powers. Moreover, with signing a secret alliance with Germany, they entered the Ottoman Empire World War I against to Britain, France and Russia.

The empire and its ally Germany were disastrously defeated at the war. This disastrous defeat led the dissolution of the empire. The most of Anatolia (Asia Minor) was occupied by imperialist powers. Against this occupation a resistance movement was formed by notable's of the towns and by Anatolian peasantry. Some of the remaining elements of the CUP supported this movement and with its remaining network started to organise a more formal and united resistance movement. Mustafa Kemal was one of them. He went to Anatolia and quickly gained its leadership. Thus the independence war which was based its head quarters in a small town called Ankara in central Anatolia, had started.

Before the Ottoman empire's western style centralisation had many minorities in the empire. Yet this minorities was defined mainly according to their religion and this system had called 'millet system'. Every millet represented a religious community and they were relatively free in determining their affairs. However, with appearance of nation state ideal these minorities of the empire (mainly Christian ones) had started to gain their independence. Yet Muslim minorities did not follow their example till the World War I. During the war the CUP government attempted to clean remaining Christian communities because of the fear that their insurrections jeopardise the Ottoman's war effort. Armenian insurrection in the east part of the empire pushed the CUP government attempted ethnic cleansing of Armenians with the help of Kurdish tribes who also lived there. As a result of this, Armenian community faced genocide, thus they were forced to emigrate under terrible atrocities out of the Ottoman Empire.

On the other hand, at the end of the war, the Muslim minorities also gained independence from empire with help of Britain. These are the Arab countries. Also Kurds demanded their independence and they followed the Arab countries's example. They sought the help of Britain. Britain had rejected any kind of mandate and an armed commitment to Kurds, yet in Sevr Treaty (drawn up in 1920) Britain ensured an autonomous Kurdistan.

Kurds helped the independence war of Turkey because after the Greek invasion of the western Anatolia they viewed it as that it was a war between a Muslim community and an Christian community. Because of their shared religion (Islam) they helped Turkish side throughout the war. Mustafa



Kemal also ensured them with a promise of autonomy after the war. He passed this as a decree from resistance's Grand National Assembly.

### *The Formation of the Republic (1923-1946)*

In 1921 the independence movement defeated all allied forces in Asia Minor, and all imperialist powers left Istanbul and Anatolia. The leader of the movement Mustafa Kemal declared republic of Turkey in 1923 and he effectively dismantled the Ottoman Empire and the Khalifet (The Ottoman Sultans were the Khalifet, that is, they were also head of the Muslims all over the world.) Thus so called Kemalist revolution had started.

Mustafa Kemal formed a political party that was called Republican People's Party (RPP) and firstly tried to eliminate every kind of opposition which could come from his comrades from the resistance days. As a war hero, with his open support of the RPP, he undermined support of opposition groups. The main opposition group formed a party on western style liberal beliefs. This was the Progressive Republican Party (PRP) (1924). Its leadership were mainly generals of the independent war. Yet, Mustafa Kemal using Kurdish Insurrection (Sheikh Said insurrection (1925)) as a pretext, accused them as traitors and eliminated them either by killing (he tried them in the Independence Courts which was first set up during the independence war and again it was re-launched during the Kurdish revolt) or exiling. He thus gradually became "eternal leader" and Turkey started to be governed by a single party. The RPP consisted mostly from ex-members of the CUP and young nationalists.

The main feature of this party was that it saw its mission was that to westernise Turkey and so rise it to the level of European civilisation. The builders of this ideology looked with contempt to the people of Anatolia and what they saw in them was that "They were backward people and they had to be westernised". This mission was accompanied by a fierce jacobinism which was summoned up in their slogan "For People, yet against People". For example for them, if people were resisting to modernisation because of their religious convictions, this had to be done by force. They used the Independence Courts (they were hardly be called as courts because the judges did not follow any kind of known law procedures) in crushing the opposition every kind.

On the other hand, the Turkish left-wing had got not very much history behind them. In the Ottoman area, in its attempts to modernisation a kind of left-wing movement which allied itself with the workers emerged and it had organised a couple of strikes in Istanbul. Yet this movement was very weak. During the independence war with effect of the October Revolution 1917, a Communist Party of Turkey appeared. The Communist Party of Turkey (CPT), with directives of Comintern, supported Mustafa Kemal's modernist revolution. Yet, they could not save themselves from the oppression of Kemalist regime. These oppressions nearly pushed it to non-functioning.

day feature of the life in Turkey. The capitalist classes were not happy with this and the organised worker movement was causing real problems to the big capitalists. Yet, this gloomy situation was a perfect pretext for the Army to return to government.

### *The Third Coup and afterwards (1980- ...)*

In 12th September 1980, the Turkish Army once again gained the control of the government with a coup. The JP's Demirel's coalition government was dissolved by the army. The army also dissolved the parliament and it formed a National Defence Committee that consisted of the Army's chiefs of staff. Thus the army effectively took the control of all state apparatus, unlike the previous military coup.

In a few days, the main objective of the coup became clear: the destruction of the left-wing movements and their popular support. The martial courts were founded and large number of the left-wing were arrested and imprisoned. The systematic torture of the detainees and the prisoners risen to unseen levels. The suspected workers, journalists, youths and civil servants were brutally tortured by the police and the army. All democratic and the worker's rights were banned, and the media were heavily censored. All political parties, organisations were closed down. Even the non-political organisations were banned. All media became the mouth of the military coup.

The military regime's objectives were to eliminate all opposition and to set up a new kind of Turkey that was based on patriotism and obedience. Moreover, the worker's movement had to be stopped in order to return of high profits that the big capitalist used to have in Turkey. In order to achieve these, the military regime pumped a new a kind of Kemalism by using media. Moreover, they restructured the universities for this purpose. They were attempting to change the fabric of the society to an apolitical and a capitalist society.

For this, they applied a brutal suppression to the people and particularly to the left-wing and the democrats. A lot of people were killed in the torture and many of their bodies were never recovered. They were called as "missing persons" by the police and any kind of information about the was denied even to their relatives. Apart from the systematic torture, the army used "shoot to kill" policy against the left-wing militants. They killed many militants on the spot they found.

The same oppression applied to Kurdish areas as well. In Diyarbakir Prison the torture of the political prisoners went beyond all known torture incidents. All the prisoners routinely tortured for years.

Yet the military regime prepared a new undemocratic constitution - instead of the ex more democratic one, and they put it to a public referendum. The purpose of the referendum was clear to gain legitimacy for the military regime. The referendum took place in an undemocratic way. No-



Turkish community in Cyprus faced discrimination and racism by the majority Greek Governments, yet that does not justify the invasion and the current situation in Cyprus.

After the amnesty a more free political climate came to being in Turkey. The freed left-wing militants continued their political struggle from where they had left it. This also meant more schism in the left-wing. The existing organisations and groups divided into several groups because of the strategical differences among the members. In this climate, all the new or old groups engaged a fierce competition with each other in the left-wing political arena -instead of forming a unitary front against the ruling classes.

Ecevit's government could not be able to continue the coalition government with the radical Islamist NSP. Now, JP's leader Demirel formed a coalition government that was called Nationalist Front (NF) by including all the rightist parties that had seat in the parliament. In this coalition government, Turkes's fascist party NMP had an important position and using its influence in the government, Turkes employed his fascist militants in the state's apparatus and its bureaucracy. Thus, he organised its party inside the state structure. This was going to help the regime in the coming year in suppressing the left-wing popular rising.

After the constitution of the National Front government, the left-wing movements gained more and more popular support, yet the emergence of the fascist terror against the left-wing meant a kind of civil war in Turkey (in which more than 5.000 people died). The fascist dead squads killed every day several left-wing youth. The armed left-wing groups retaliated them, and killed the fascists militants and the sympathisers of the fascist groups. Also, inside the left-wing camp the ideological and the strategical differences started to end up with blood feuds -and killing each others' militants and the sympathisers.

The fascist NMP also used the differences of religious sects amongst people of Turkey. They encouraged hatred of Sunni Muslims against Alevite Muslims - particularly in the areas where they lived side by side. The sunni Muslims with the leadership of Fascist NMP's supporters and militants attacked Alevite communities all over Turkey. The most terrible of these attacks took place in 1979 in Maras. Fascist NMP's supporters and Sunni Muslims massacred Alevites in the city of Maras. The score of the death toll were never publicly announced but hundreds of Alevites were killed in this event and the Alevites were forced to emigrate from Maras to other cities of Turkey.

In this undeclared civil war climate governments were losing effectiveness. The left-wing organisations got hold of more than half of the worker's trade unions and in the rural areas they started to have stronghold centres. In other words, the left-wing started to effect the political arena of Turkey more than ever. The strikes and big mass protest marches became every-

In the first decade of the Republic as we have seen one of the main problem was to oppress the opposition inside of the nationalist camp and oppress to people's reactions against modernisation's reforms. Kurdish revolts were another major problem of that period. Although Mustafa Kemal promised an autonomy to Kurds, after victory of the independence war he set up a Turkish Republic which was based on an nationalist unitary state conception. Kurds resented this and also, they were not happy with reforms such as abolition of the Khalifet and Sheria Laws (so also ending of the Ottoman's Islamic regime and the Khalifet). Their traditional feudal social structure was openly in conflict with what the RPP government was aiming at for Turkey. This caused further resentment among Kurdish Tribe leaders. Moreover, newly formed borders of the national state meant that deprivation of their traditional economical ties with south Mesopotamia and Iran regions. These resentments followed several revolts of Kurds. The RPP government viewed these as conservative reactions against modernist and progressive regime or it viewed as banditry who represented archaic and backward system of the society. It is strange that The Communist Party of Turkey also supported the RPP's government bloody repression of these revolts. Moreover, the left-wing in Turkey hardly separated itself from the Kemalist modernist project till 1980's in the broader sense of word.

The most important Kurdish insurrections of that period were Sheikh Said (1925) and Dersim (Dersim was a county of the eastern part of Turkey which mainly populated by Kurds) insurrection (1925). Although the Kurds of Dersim was in some sense in favour of the republic (because the Kurds of Dersim was Alevite sect of Islam that had been oppressed throughout history of the Ottoman empire and newly formed republic had made impossible this oppression and so gained support of all Alevite people), they were not able to bear any more the administrative reforms (more centralisation), and economic reforms (more deprivation of traditional economics life lines) and national oppression. These two major revolt had been oppressed with blood. Again so called Independence Courts were set up and all leaders of these revolt hanged and the tribes who supported these revolts, forced to immigrate to western Turkey.

It was about 1930's, while the RPP continued the reforms such as introduction of Latin alphabet (1928), the contradiction among the ruling classes was becoming untenable. On the one side Mustafa Kemal and the RPP, on the other side ex-CUP members and notables of small cities and towns who thought the Kemalist reforms went too far. The latter ones, although they did not start an open war against Kemalist dictatorship, they attempted to set up an political party. Their intention was to oppose the dictatorship within system. (Kemalist reforms were openly destroying the traditional identity of Turkish nationals and ethnic minorities by imposing a new kind of nationalist and modernist discourse.) Mustafa Kemal sensing popular discontent in the country allowed this. Thus the Free Repub-



lican Party was founded at 12th August 1930, yet it was closed in 17th November. One month later this followed by a revolt of people of Menemen (a town in the western part of Turkey) on the basis of their objection to Kemalist reforms. They were not happy with the dissolution of Khalifat and foundation of a laicist state. Also they represented the popular discontent against the other Kemalist reforms. Again this revolt was suppressed by blood. This was followed by trials and executions.

In 1938 Mustafa Kemal died and Ismet Inonu was elected as the President of the republic by the RPP. They declared him "National Chief" and Ismet Inonu increased the amount of suppression against the opposition. Especially, suspected members of the Communist Party of Turkey were followed, detained and imprisoned. In 1940's Ismet Inonu using the alibi of Second World War, increased the power of the central government all over the country. For non-Muslims he imposed a special tax in order to prevent their economical development. The poorest of the non-Muslim communities suffered the most. Ismet Inonu's government forced them to pay their tax in working community projects such as building public roads and etc.,

The regime of Ismet Inonu had played very balanced foreign policy during the war. In other words, he showed himself to both side as their secret supporter, yet he remained neutral. Thanks to this policy, people of Turkey had not lived the catastrophe of the Second World War. However, he could not sustained that neutrality after the war, he aligned Turkey with the West. Yet the demands of the west for more liberal democracy and raising of the opposition inside the country pushed Ismet Inonu in to pluralistic politics. Political parties were allowed and the most important one of these, the Democratic Party (DP) set up by ex-RPP members who represented rural towns's petty bourgeoisie.

#### *The Introduction of the Pluralistic Democracy (1946-1960)*

In 1946 an election was held. Yet, this election was not fair and free. The "National Chief's" government had oppressed opposition with threats and endless bureaucracy. Also they stole votes and so they won against the opposition. Moreover, seizing the more flexible political climax, the Communist Party of Turkey, attempted to be legal. It set up a legal party but this party was immediately closed and all the members was sent to prisons. In opposition groups, only the DP (Democratic Party) had a change because of its popular support and most importantly its opposition tone was rather a supporter of the status quo. It was endeavouring an opposition within the system.

Following elections resulted in victory of the DP in 1950. The power was held by a different political organisation first time in the history of the republic. In this more fair and free elections the RPP was heavily defeated and had only a small majority in the parliament. Adnan Mendres as one of the leaders of the DP became the prime minister.

ment the pretext to hunt for the left-wing all over Turkey. The prisons were full by the left-wingers and the democrats. And the systematic torture of the prisoners went rife by the police. In other words, systematic torture became a standard treatment to all of the left-wing detainees.

In connection with the government suppression of the left-wing, all democratic rights were banned and the special Martial Courts were set up by the government in several cities. The left-wing prisoners were heavily sentenced by these courts. In short the 12th March 1971 Army Coup resulted in a heavy suppression of the left-wing. The Revolutionary Youth organisation's all member were arrested and heavily sentenced by the Martial Courts. In the trials, the fascist militants who used to assault them called as witnesses to their destructive activities by the state prosecutor.

Deniz Gezmis's the People's Liberation Army of Turkey went into the mountains in order to launch and organise a rural guerrilla movement. Soon, the leaders of this movement, Deniz Gezmis, Huseyin Inan and Yusuf Aslan was caught by an army operation in the mountains. They were put to the Martial Court and sentenced to the death by it. They were hanged in May 5th 1972. Similarly, the city's guerrilla movement PLP-FT's leader Mahir Cayan and his comrades after running from Maltepe Prison in Ankara, they kidnapped three English Technician who were working in Turkey. They were found in a village in the northern Anatolia by the Army. Their demands for release of the English Technicians was rejected and the Army murdered all of them -including the technicians by a heavy missiles bombardment.

The military coup had seemed to end the left-wing rising, yet the opposition of the people and the general discontent among the people was not able to be undermined. In the suppressed political climate, people inclined to support to Ecevit's RPP that was becoming more left-wing than ever. This was reflected in the first free elections. The elections took place at the end of 1973 and Ecevit's RPP gained a considerable victory. This was end of the military regime that took the control in 1971.

However, the victory of the Ecevit's party was not enough to form a government, he constituted a coalition government with newly formed radical Islamist party called the National Salvation Party (NSP). Soon, Ecevit's government declared an amnesty to all prisoners because of the public pressure in the summer of 1974. Nearly all the left-wing prisoners were freed, only some prisoners who were sentenced to life imprisonment remained in the prisons.

After declaring general amnesty, the Government of Ecevit's first steps were to use the situation in Cyprus (i.e., backed by Greek military junta government fascist Samson toppled the Makarios government and started the policy of Hellenization in Cyprus.). As a direct result of this, long awaited excuse was available for Turkey and Ecevit government to invade Cyprus and this invasion is continuing for the past twenty years. It is true that



the left-wing and they joined to the Workers Party of Turkey. On the other hand, the Kurdish university students set up their own organisation, the Revolutionary Culture Societies of the East (RCSE). The RCSE that was also in the left-wing politics was generally supported the struggle of the left-wing, yet it was paying a special attention to the struggle of the Kurdish people who were mainly living in the eastern part of Turkey. Moreover, they organised a series of "the East" demos and meetings which were aimed to bring the Turkish Army's (suppressing) special treatment of the Kurds in the eastern part of Turkey to the public attention.

In the rising political climate of Turkey, the schism in the left-wing did not stop with the division of the WPT to two different groups. It continued with increasing its momentum throughout the left-wing. Particularly, the NDR was divided in to several groups. The Maoist faction inside of this group was the first to separate themselves from the NDR. They formed a movement called the Light (Aydinlik). After them, the supporters of the armed struggle split themselves from the organisation. Among the advocates of the armed struggle two groups were emerged according to their opinions on the nature of the strategy of the armed struggle. One of them was headed by Mahir Cayan who was a student leader from the Ankara University's the Faculty of Politics. He founded the People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (PLP-FT). He was arguing for a city based guerrilla movement which was widely practised in the South America in these days. The second one, the People's Liberation Army of Turkey (PLAT) was headed by Deniz Gezmiş who was one of the most influential leaders of the left-wing student movement. In contrast to PLP-FT, PLAT was arguing for a Che Guevara's style of rural guerrilla movement.

Meanwhile, the radical Islamist groups and the fascist street movements had started to aggress the leftists in order to suppress the rising mass movements. The armed fascists engaged to attack to the universities and killed the left-wing students. Also Turkey was in an economic crisis and the government was failing to bring solutions to the problem. Parallel to that the armed left-wing groups launched bank robberies all over the Turkey in order to fund the expense of their struggle. It was as if the mechanism of the system was unable to control the emerging events in Turkey.

#### *The Second Military Coup and afterwards (1971-1980)*

This desperate situation of the system was followed by a military coup in 12th March 1971. At the first sight, the coup looked like to carry a left-wing reformist character. In this direction, a reformist civilian government was set up by the army's generals. However, the government started to detain and imprison all the leftists all over Turkey. In the police centres, heavy torture took place in the interrogation of the arrested left-wingers.

Faced with the government's attack on the left-wing, the armed left-wing groups launched a series of armed attacks. The murder of the Israel's Ambassador of Turkey by the armed left-wing groups, gave the govern-

The DP regime that did not keep its more democracy promises to the people, aligned itself with USA. And received military aid from it. Turkey entered NATO in 1952. As a result of this Turkey sent military personnel to the Korean War. They changed the constitution in order to suppress the emerging worker movement. They put heavy fines on expressing views about the class conflicts or on organisation of any form of political groups on the basis of class struggle. On the other hand, on economical level, they flourished commerce. Their slogan was: "A millionaire for every street." They wanted to create capitalists and for this purpose they used the foreign aid money and foreign credits to. They gave credits to small producers and manufacturers. They relaxed the import and the export procedures. They also supported rural notables and the large landowners with financial credits. They also gave financial assistance to small landowners. Their support of rural population made them very popular with peasantry. Moreover, they started huge infrastructure projects such modern highways and hydroelectric dams all over the country.

The DP's support of commerce and peasantry was resented by the city's people which consisted of civil servants, army officers and students. The RPP used this resentment and became a champion of the democracy. Its opposition had increased its volume yet it lost 1954 and 1957's elections. Meanwhile, the economy entered into a deep crisis and this caused a great dissatisfaction among all layers of society. (The reason for this crisis was that USA's stoppage of more financial credits the DP's regime asking)

Forced with the economical crisis, the DP government had decided to spread Nationalism. Therefore by using the Cyprus problem, they encouraged hatred among Turks against Greeks who lived in Turkey. The shops and houses of Greek Community were vandalised and looted. As a consequence of that most of the Greek population of Istanbul were forced to emigrate from Turkey.

In 1959, rumours started to spread about coming of a military coup. Indeed, small and medium ranking officers of the army was planning a military coup against the DP's government. In 1960 student's demos against the government created an atmosphere of general uprising. In April 1960 two students were killed by the police in these demos. This was succeeded by a successful military coup in 27th May, though there were only a couple of months to the elections that the DP's government was likely to be defeated.

#### *The First Military Coup and afterwards (1960-1971)*

The leaders of the military coup set up a National Union Committee that made up mostly from army generals and academics. Soon with pressure of the leader of the RPP, Ismet Inonu, the National Union Committee, declared that the elections were going to be held after the its preparation of a new constitution for the republic in short time. The DP's junior members,



its MPs, its ministers were put into prison for coming trials. In the trials ex-prime minister Adnan Menderes, ex-foreign minister Zorlu and ex-finance minister Polatkan were sentenced to death. Ex-president of the republic Bayar who was a founder member of the DP, was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Meanwhile the National Union Committee prepared a new constitution. In this constitution, basic human rights and workers rights were put under the protection of the constitution for the first time in the republic's history. These new freedoms helped the left-wing to come to legality from underground activities. The Workers Party Of Turkey was founded and Mehmet Ali Aybar was selected to its leadership. The WPT united all left-wing's faction and gained an unpredicted popular support.

The constitution was accepted by a public referendum (%60 of electorates said "Yes" to the new constitution) and the elections for the MP's followed this. Although every thing was in favour for them in the elections, the RPP did not get a clear majority. The newly formed Justice Party (JP) that indeed was the DP with a new name and a new leader, had considerable amount of votes in the election. Because of the hanged parliament, the JP and the RPP formed a coalition government. Afterwards the coalition government became a pattern for the following governments till 1965.

In these years a mass anti-imperialist lobby with nationalist and left-wing inspirations gained momentum. This movement headed by university students. This movement campaigned for a national petroleum board and at the peak of this campaign -because of the USA's pro-Greek attitude on Cyprus's problems, huge public demonstrations were held against the USA in the August of 1964. Parallel to the politicising of students, a worker movement also emerged.

The elections in 1965 were resulted in victory for the Justice Party. With its new leader who enjoyed the support of the USA, the JP had the majority to form the government. The Workers Party of Turkey also had a success, it gained 15 seats in the new parliament. Between 1965-70, the political stage of Turkey was occupied by students, workers and peasants movements and demos. The left-wing earned support of these groups, became more powerful political force. Even RPP with effect of this popular anti-imperialists feeling and left-wing feelings tried to emerge into a social democratic style party. They got rid of their "National Chief" Ismet Inonu, and elected a new leader in the first years of the 70's. The new leader was a young social democrat Bulent Ecevit. His political line was as he expressed "Centre of Left".

In 1968, Turkey faced a new wave of anti-imperialist and democratic demands of the students like most of the countries in the World. Huge demos were staged and the students engaged bloody battles with the police. The student movement was more radical in their left-wing opinions.

The state power and bourgeoisie felt a need to counter this rising of the left-wing movements. Their solution was to organise an ultra nationalist civilian movement. Alpaslan Turkes who was a member of the military coup in 1960 and an fascist, became the leader of this movement. He organised a political party which was named the Nationalist Movement Party (NMP). He directed the supporters of his party to open a war on all leftists and the communists. On the other hand, religious wing of the Justice Party was also used as movement to confront the rising of left-wing. Radical religious groups several times attacked the students marches and demos.

After enjoying 1968's popularisation and rising, the left-wing faced conflicts in its ranks. This was mostly because of the Workers Party of Turkey's parliamentarist policies. The WPT's leadership believed in the parliamentary politics in the struggle of the working class. Therefore, they tried to distance themselves from the events that were taking place in the streets. Even they engaged to prevent these mass protests in some instances. For example, in 1968's summer a wave of protest actions launched against visiting USA's 6th Navy Fleet by the left-wing students and youth. The WPT and its youth organisation the Federation of Idea Clubs (FIC) (this organisation took the name of the Revolutionary Youth in the following years) built barricades to block the way of the students which were marching to confront with a visiting USA's 6th Navy Fleet in Istanbul.

Another very important event of the period was occurred in 15th-16th of June 1970. The Demirel's JP's government attempted to restrict the workers rights with a law. The newly formed left-wing Trade Union the Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Union (CRWU) organised a series of public meetings and marches against this law covering all parts of Istanbul. The workers and public marched in mass numbers all over Istanbul in 15th-16th of June. The climate was an uprising and several fighting occurred between the police and the marchers. In the following years, the RWU became one of the biggest Trade Union in Turkey till it was banned in 1980's military coup.

This attitude of the WPT's leadership led serious discussions inside the party. The same discussions took place in the party's youth organisation, FIC. Especially a radical group which was headed by an ex-member of the Communist Party of Turkey, Mihri Belli, attacked the passivist and the parliamentarist approaches of the leadership of the WPT in recent events. This radical group that was called itself as National Democratic Revolutionary (NDR), demanded more effective and active struggle policies from the leadership of the WPT. Consequently, this discussion resulted in dividing the WPT into two separate groups. Eventually, these groups started to compete with each other in the left-wing political arena for the political leadership.

Moreover, Kurds had begun to organise themselves in that more democratic area. Particularly the Kurdish intellectuals aligned themselves with